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BOOK REVIEWS

Medieval Story and the Beginnings of the Social Ideals of English-speaking People. By WILLIAM WITHERLE LAWRENCE, PH.D. New York: Columbia University Press, 1911. Pp. xiv+236.

It is a pleasant task to read and appraise such a book as Professor Lawrence' *Medieval Story*. Professor Lawrence has undertaken to outline the history of the great mediaeval stories and to discover in them the beginnings of the social ideals of English-speaking people. One is glad to review the mediaeval stories, so familiar through reference and in modern versions, though often unknown at first hand, and even more glad to find in them the prototype of much that is splendid and hopeful in our modern state. Particularly will this volume appeal to the students of literature and history.

It is hardly conceivable that any teacher of English literature of whatever grade would consciously lack such acquaintance with our English stories of the Middle Ages and earlier periods as may be gained from these eight chapters. It is true, some of the stories, such as "Reynard the Fox" and the "Song of Roland" do not appear in any of our English readings in schools. But the Arthurian story, the story of the Holy Grail, the Robin Hood ballads, "Beowulf" not infrequently, the "Canterbury Tales" less infrequently do so appear. This book, the best brief book on this subject that I know, is needed by teachers of such readings.

It deals with the origin of these stories, outlines each story in fascinating summary, compares briefly the different versions, and indicates at every turn the social ideals to be found in each, not forgetting the modern or related forms of these stories, like Scott's ballads, Tennyson's "Idylls," Lowell's "Vision of Sir Launfal," Uncle Remus' Brer Rabbit stories, Kipling's "Just-So Stories," and "Jungle Books," Maeterlinck's "Blue Bird," and others. Here is the vigor of Beowulf ruling in "warlike and democratic, yet cultivated and highly-conventionalized society." Then we see the heroism of Roland, symbol of a "consecration to a higher ideal of church and state"; we see Arthur, "the champion of the forces of righteousness." We discover knightly and ascetic ideals in the Grail legend opposed to the cynicism and satire of "Reynard the Fox" and tempered by "the hatred of sham and oppression" shown by that hero of the common people, Robin Hood. And at last we view the recognition and acceptance of social consciousness in the "Canterbury Tales."

The author points out how "Beowulf" reveals the temper of the early Anglo-Saxon people, the Song of Roland marks the introduction of French ideals, the Arthurian legends and the legend of the Holy Grail embody the spirit of chivalry against which may be set the democratic protests of Reynard

the Fox and Robin Hood. The Canterbury Tales continue the expression of the democratic movement and mark the opening of the era of complex social struggle in which we find ourselves.

Altogether this is a highly satisfactory book. It is worthy of the Columbia University Press and of the author. A brief but excellent classified bibliography is appended to answer the question, sure to arise, "Where can I read some of these stories at first hand?" The matter of these chapters was delivered as eight lectures in Cooper Union, on the Hewitt Foundation, before an average audience. Only intelligent interest was assumed. As printed the lectures have been altered but little; they are for the general reader as much as for the student. They cannot fail to instruct and entertain. One might spend some words commending Professor Lawrence's compact style, which permits and merits no skipping and one must speak if only briefly of the frequent admirable references to modern stories and poems, and to modern social ideals. It is refreshing to find here Brer Rabbit and the "Jungle Books" and the "Blue Bird," and cowboy songs and mention of modern politics and modern cartoons all woven cleverly and helpfully into the fabric of these chapters.

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The Enjoyment of Poetry. By MAX EASTMAN. New York: Scribner, 1913.

There are many recent treatises on poetry, which would explain its essential nature to the student. But Mr. Max Eastman's *Enjoyment of Poetry* differs from the most of these in several points. They aim directly at increasing our knowledge about poetry, and only indirectly at increasing our enjoyment of it. Mr. Eastman's book makes directly and avowedly for our fuller appreciation of poetry, imparting by the way such understanding of its larger aspects and elements as this end demands.

Mr. Eastman's fundamental conception of his subject gives ground for further distinction. Poetry is too often, even in these days of genetic and functional psychology, analyzed rather as a finished product than as a living process. Mr. Eastman is concerned with the act of poetry, wherever it may be found, not only in print, but in common talk, even in slang. He examines this poetic process through the lenses of modern psychology, but these are so clear that the reader feels himself to be using his own unmediated vision. Instead of dealing with poetry, then, as an isolated phenomenon, limited to a few favored individuals, Mr. Eastman recognizes the poetic activity as an essential stage or element in our mental life. "Poetry but dwells upon and perfects that significant imagery which is the material instrument of all thinking." Though primitive folk and children instinctively use this natural instrument of all thinking, "Education soon robs them of this quaintness. They are taught that they must get understanding, they must not linger and behold."